

Chapter Four

Appraisal

This chapter considers the work of senior education administrators in small states as evaluators or assessors of institutions and individuals. It suggests that the shortage of senior staff and the highly sensitive transparent communities of small states should encourage senior education administrators to extend their assessment role to one of communication. The latter transforms performance evaluation from an instrument of reward or punishment into a liaison mechanism which promotes good work and offers remedies for poor performance. This chapter suggests criteria to assess educational organizations and the personnel working in them. These criteria can serve as valuable feedback to staff in a manner that motivates rather than merely reprimands.

Evaluation with Guidance

One important function of senior education administrators is to evaluate and pass judgement on the work performance of educational institutions, units serving the educational service and their personnel. Evaluation becomes highly restrictive and negative when limited to criticism without guidance. However, an ability to combine criticism with guidance becomes extremely valuable in small states for several reasons. First, the limited number of senior officials compels senior educational administrators to take on both tasks, to monitor as well as to counsel subordinates. Second, unlike their counterparts in large states, senior officials cannot evaluate and report on institutions or individuals from the distant anonymity of Head Office long distances away. They operate in small, sensitive communities where disapproval has to be transmitted with great tact in the form of advice. Third, it is good administrative practice to adopt the positive strategy where evaluation becomes a feedback mechanism to identify merit and suggest remedies for shortcomings.

This twin 'assessment-cum-guidance' approach extends the senior

education administrators' role from mere performance evaluation to a process of communication between the hierarchy and those lower down the organizational scale. On the one hand, they communicate educational and administrative policies and ensure that subordinates carry them out efficiently. On the other hand, they refer back to those at the top the concerns and needs of the rank and file of the education service. In this respect, small states have the advantage that personal communications are often highly developed so that quick evaluation and feedback can lead to speedy implementation of policies and, if necessary, their revision or total abolition.

In a complex organization, such as an educational system, there are instances when individuals or institutions will deserve censure. In such cases senior officials do not have to act 'the nice guys', covering up or making excuses for incompetent or shabby work. They owe it to the educational system that employs them, to the community, as well as to those who perform their work conscientiously and efficiently, to be fair, to praise where praise is due, to retribute where retribution is necessary. However, criticism need not be inquisitorial.

* ***The Right to Counsel*** *

* Before you take on the counselling role, ask yourself if the situation *

* really calls for it. The first step is to give the individual a reasonable *

* chance to turn things around under his or her own power, with your *

* whole-hearted support, but without your interference. Counselling is *

* not meddling — “involvement without the right or an invitation”. Too *

* soon is as disastrous as too late. You have the right to counsel when and *

* only when you're invited, or performance problems threaten to *

* undermine an individual's ability to contribute overtime in spite of *

* conscientious education and coaching. The right to counsel is earned by *

* your demonstrated and repeated willingness to educate and coach first. *

* If you pass that tough first and the problems persist, it's time to extend *

* a purposeful hand: “I want you to be effective, and I know that you *

* want to be effective. Let's see how we can work together to achieve *

* that.” *

* *

* Peters Tom and Nancy Austin (1985), *A Passion for Excellence: **

* *The Leadership Difference*. Foutana/Collins, Glasgow. *

* *

* — Would you say that the approach proposed by Peters and Austin *

* will work in your organization? If not, what approach would you *

* suggest? *

* *

Experienced administrators know that evaluation and criticism will be more readily acceptable if presented in a counselling and advisory style together with suggestions for solutions and remedies. Evaluation reports become particularly effective when they contain factual and accurate information, present observations from different angles, are written in balanced rather than emotive language, and do justice to valid if failed effort.

Evaluating an Organization

The appraisal of an educational organization's work varies according to the evaluator's point of view. Research shows, for example, that politicians regard the function of public bodies quite differently from the civil servants that man them. Similarly, the employees' conceptions of the work place generally contrasts with those of their employers. The directives or procedures dictated by superiors are regarded in a different light by subordinates. Such conflicts become particularly complex for senior educational administrators in small states when their multiple roles require them to view the same situation from quite different perspectives. For example, the same official often has to mediate — perhaps in close occupational and social conditions — between different people or different sectors of the same organization, while in the mediator role he/she has to ensure that these sectors continue to operate efficiently.

The efficiency of an educational organization can be evaluated under three main headings:

- a. Its ability to fulfil educational aims,
- b. Its communication effectiveness,
- c. Its organizational style.

Organization's ability to fulfil educational aims

Applying evaluation criteria falling under this category, senior education administrators have to ascertain that:

- a. Personnel are fully aware of the national educational aims and the function of their organization in implementing them;
- b. Staff are competent to transform general aims into specific operational strategies;
- c. Staff are professionally trained and can demonstrate their competence at a constant operational level;
- d. Members of staff are committed to improve their competence by

participating in professional development programmes and to share their occupational experiences with their colleagues.

When it comes to the evaluation of schools, for example, senior education administrators must ensure that the teaching abilities and commitment of staff are reflected in their students' academic accomplishments and that these are in line with the community's expectations.

Senior officials have to ascertain that their organization responds to the changing needs of the community, local industry and national requirements, and that it does so with consistently positive results. Owing to the shortage of resources and the often centralized nature of educational systems in small states, the contribution of every sector in the organization towards nationally set goals assumes particular importance. Large, affluent states can absorb the diversity, redundancy, and a certain amount of wastage which small developing, poor countries cannot afford. The latter depend on the full utilization of all their intellectual, technical and craft talents to promote self-sufficiency and reduce dependency. The educational system should be regarded as a major contributor to this end.

Communication effectiveness

The effectiveness of an organization's communication network in small states can be evaluated by examining carefully the extent to which its administration:

- a. Promotes procedures that keep staff in touch with the people it serves (including the reticent and the troublesome), with the general members of the community (including the not-so-prominent and not-so-caring), and with local leaders (including those who are sceptical and critical);
- b. Fosters healthy inter-personal relationships where staff at different levels can exchange views, opinions and criticism without fear of ridicule or retribution;
- c. Extracts the best in people, exploiting their potential by offering all members of the organization the opportunity to work together towards shared objectives.

As argued earlier, social interaction tends to be highly developed and sophisticated in small states. It will therefore be to the advantage of the educational organization to link up and tune into the community's communication network, otherwise it will become

isolated and eventually come to be regarded as unresponsive and irrelevant to the community's needs.

 *
 * **Staff Vitality** *
 * Considerable self-examination is required to custom design a work *
 * environment that fosters faculty vitality. As they pursue this objective, *
 * educational institutions and organizations should repeatedly ask *
 * themselves the following questions: *
 * *
 * — What is our primary educational mission? *
 * — Where do we want our institution to be five, ten, fifteen years from *
 * now? *
 * — Who are our faculty members? *
 * — What are their strengths, weaknesses, and special needs? *
 * — What types of incentives will best support our goals? *
 * — Which incentives are likely to have the greatest and longest-lasting *
 * impact on our faculty members? *
 * — What combination of incentives can we afford to offer? *
 * *
 * Educational resources — economic, physical, and human — are too *
 * precious to waste. Thoughtful answers to questions of this sort will help *
 * higher education institutions develop incentives that will most *
 * effectively support the performance and renewal of their most *
 * important resource — their faculty members. *
 * *
 * Baldwin, R.J. (ed.), (1985) "Incentives for Faculty Vitality", in *
 * *New Directions for Higher Education*, No. 51, Jossey-Bass, San *
 * Francisco. *
 * *
 * — When last did you, and the people around you, ask yourself the *
 * questions posed above? *
 * *

Organizational style

The organizational style can be regarded as an extension of the communication process, where senior education administrators test whether the set-up:

- a. Encourages pleasant but businesslike working procedures operating in a clean and welcome physical environment;
- b. Insists on regular and punctual attendance by staff who work to well-established schedules;
- c. Maintains reward and motivational incentives for work well done;
- d. Possesses an efficient negotiating and problem-solving mechanism

- in case of conflicts;
- e. Ensures a fair distribution of responsibilities and reasonable demands for accountability with an equitable sharing of resources;
 - f. Encourages innovation and experimentation to avoid professional and organizational stagnation, and at the same time preserve valuable traditions that reinforce the organization's identity and ethos.

It will be quite unrealistic for senior education administrators in small states to expect every unit in the organization to satisfy fully all the evaluation criteria falling under the three categories. However, a 'good' organization should be able to satisfy the majority of these characteristics.

Personnel Appraisal

Personnel appraisal is always a delicate task, especially in countries or organizations where the evaluator and the assessed live in a close social environment and where it becomes extremely difficult to avoid bias and not to be influenced by personal considerations and community prejudices. However, personal performance evaluation becomes easier to perform and accept when the assessor adopts a positive stance, that of promoting an atmosphere of guidance and counselling. Such an approach attempts to identify in subordinates:

- a. Their strengths and weaknesses, their special talents or needs, in order to facilitate personal and professional satisfaction and growth;
- b. Their adaptability, potential and suitability for new responsibilities, for promotion, for further training, etc.;
- c. Their source of job satisfaction and motivation as a counter balance to career stagnation, fatigue or diminution of vocational interest.

In cases where performance is so weak or negligent that remedial or disciplinary action is required, it is more effective to act pro-actively rather than retro-actively. It benefits the individual and the organization if employees are helped to overcome their faults rather than be punished. For example, disciplinary action should be carefully considered for its relativity to the misdemeanour, that it is neither too lenient for any real effect, nor too harsh as to create injustice and negative reactions. Furthermore, when prescribing disciplinary action senior administrators will do well to ensure that it can actually be carried out. One should not order, for example, the transfer of members of staff if there are no posts the culprits can be

transferred to, or if they will land in a more favourable position than previously.

Before determining the type of disciplinary action to be taken, senior education administrators in closely-knit societies may have to gauge the wrong-doer's connections with influential friends or relatives. This might imply that senior education administrators have to build up a very strong case for disciplinary action.

 * **Teachers are not simply clogs in the system** *
 * Although the role of the individual teacher is crucial in improving *
 * quality in education, it is increasingly acknowledged by educational *
 * planners that it is a mistake to base reform on the question of the *
 * effectiveness of individual teachers, especially if this focuses on *
 * narrowly based schemes of teacher appraisal. It is much more useful to *
 * focus on the whole school. Nuttal (1986) has pointed out that the *
 * qualities necessary for school self-evaluation are very similar to those *
 * involved in successful schemes for teacher appraisal. First, there needs *
 * to be a climate of constructive self-criticism within the school, as well as *
 * good morale and an atmosphere of trust between teachers and their *
 * superiors. Second, a good scheme must link appraisal with appropriate *
 * action — there is no point analysing and diagnosing faults if there is no *
 * machinery or resources for bringing about improvements. Third, *
 * teachers must have a degree of autonomy in the process, and a joint *
 * problem-solving approach that focuses on tasks rather than on *
 * individuals is more likely to succeed. Finally, the importance of *
 * adequate training is always stressed. *
 *
 * Lawton, D. (1987) "The Changing Role of the Teacher: *
 * Consequences for Teacher Education and Training", *Prospects*, *
 * UNESCO Quarterly Review of Education, Vol. XVII, No. 1. *
 *
 * — To what extent do these observations about teachers' participation *
 * apply to other personnel in the educational system? *
 * — Do the conditions proposed by Lawton prevail (both for teaching *
 * and non-teaching personnel) in your educational system? If not, do *
 * you think they should, and how would you go about introducing *
 * them? *
 *
 * *****

Assessment Performance Guidelines

The following guidelines will help senior educational administrators to draw up an individual's performance report that is factual and fair:

- a. Avoid vague comments. Such terms as "a generally good

performance” or “X shows a fair amount of commitment” do not provide clear pointers of what is excellent, mediocre or poor work. It will help the assessed individual to know, preferably through examples, where they have performed well and where they need to improve.

- b. Avoid grouping all employees around the same rating by adopting the “regression to the mean” technique. This play-safe ploy may avoid comparisons and complaints, but does not award the deserving and does not offer pointers to those who need to improve their work. Eventually, play-safe evaluations render themselves meaningless.
- c. Avoid stereotyping since every individual is unique. Each employee’s performance should be evaluated for itself, untainted by past reputations, whether these happen to be favourable or damning. This does not mean that the employee’s most recent performance should not be compared with previous ones.
- d. Avoid extreme judgements. Stress both strengths and weaknesses; it is rare that a person is either all saint or all devil.
- e. Avoid discrimination on the basis of the individual rank or social and political connections. It is quite unfair to lavish praise on high officials and employees with powerful friends, while feeling safe to criticise savagely powerless subordinates. In small communities there are many temptations and pressures for this to happen.

Performance Reports

In situations where people know each other well and where they are likely to compare their performance evaluation, it is very useful if reports are drawn up to a defined structure with performance parameters that are agreed upon and understood by all concerned. Well-established and known evaluation criteria are less likely to lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation, which tend to cause greater acrimony and pain in transparent societies. It is helpful to include the following criteria, here amplified with the accompanying questions.

- a. *Competence*
 - what is the level of the individuals’ knowledge and skills for the job?
 - to what extent are they able to apply them?
- b. *Commitment*
 - are the individuals working at the best of their ability?

- are they prepared to learn from their experience and from interaction with others?
- c. *Organizational Skills*
 - do the employees organize their work thoroughly?
 - can they cope with unexpected problems?
 - can they overcome limitations?
- d. *Initiative and Leadership*
 - can the individuals take the initiative, or do they depend on suggestions or directions by others?
 - in case of difficulties, do they take the easy way out or seek the best solution even if it is more demanding than usual?
 - can they accept and cope with innovation?
- e. *Productivity*
 - do the individuals perform to the required minimum, or do they work harder than expected?
 - is their work accurate, fast, reliable, and consistently so?
- f. *Interpersonal Skills*
 - how easy or difficult is it for the individuals to develop a rapport with them?
 - do they co-operate with colleagues and participate in group activities?
- g. *Instructional Skills* (in the case of teachers)
 - do they have clear, educational aims and objectives?
 - do they prepare thoroughly their lessons?
 - is delivery of lessons effective?
 - do they have a good rapport with students?
 - do they keep up-to-date in content and methods?(see also *Follow-Up Activity Two*)

The above guidelines may not apply in all evaluations and should be adapted as appropriate. However, an agreed evaluation structure helps to introduce a high level of consistency in establishing assessment criteria, and in avoiding vastly contrasting variations in report lengths, styles and item coverage. Agreed and standardized evaluation criteria become particularly important when reports are carried out by different officials and when comparisons are required, as in the case of

promotion exercises.

Senior education administrators in small states are undoubtedly aware that the problem of subjectivity constitutes one of the greatest pitfalls, especially in those countries where the individual's antecedents or idiosyncrasies are well known. Their major challenge is to be fair, factual, consistent, and supportive. If they fail the challenge, they find it extremely difficult to live and work with colleagues and subordinates in the restricted occupational and social milieu of small states.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Activity One:

What is a 'good' Head or a 'bad' Official?

At a recent seminar in a small state, a group of deputy heads of section provided the following descriptions of High, Moderate and Low Performing heads of section and junior officials. On your own or with colleagues, review each description and state to what extent you find them acceptable. What improvements can you make on these descriptions?

Head of Section

High Performer The Head is an excellent leader of the team, is able to advise his/her subordinates and to help them professionally. He/She is a good administrator and often helps his/her subordinates solve their problems.

Moderate Performer The Head is good in the normal running of the section and is competent in dealing with ordinary problems. He/she strives hard to achieve good results from his/her staff but is not always successful because of lack of tact. He/she is sometimes caught unprepared in the daily running of the section and tends to avoid problems or misunderstands them.

Low Performer The Head is a poor administrator and inadequate as a leading professional. His/her criticism of staff is inconsistent and he/she often mishandles problems.

The Junior Officer

High Performer The official is effective and efficient, works hard and produces results. His/her work is of a constantly good standard and the results are always commendable. He/she relates well with colleagues.

Moderate Performer The official is regular in his/her work and achieves mixed results. He/she rarely causes disciplinary problems, but his/her work is irregular and fluctuating.

Low Performer The official seriously lacks self-discipline. His/her work is poor and shows serious lack of commitment.

He/she finds difficulty in mixing with colleagues, and ignores the advice of superiors.

— How would you rate yourself according to these criteria?

Activity Two:

Case Study: John P - The Star Teacher

John P. is a 43 year old teacher who has always worked hard at school. He is competent, innovative, has excellent rapport with his students and gets on very well with fellow teachers. His students consistently obtain good results. In brief, he is a teacher every Head would want to have on his or her staff. But trouble has been brewing lately. At your last two visits to John's school, the head has complained that her star teacher has become a source of concern. His attendance has become irregular, he is often late, parents complain that their children's work has become sketchy, and he hardly ever corrects it any more. Your discreet enquiries confirm the headteacher's observation; indeed, John's colleagues are finding him very irritable and he has become positively unsociable.

Although you haven't spoken to John yet, you have an inkling about the cause of his troubles. You have heard through the grapevine that his wife is very ill, some say terminally ill. Apparently she is very depressed and cannot carry out much housework. It has been observed that John does all the shopping, and many suspect that he has to carry out most of the household chores. You are convinced that with a sick wife, two teenage boys and a young girl, John has quite a load on his hands and mind.

Now the head has asked you, as the Senior Education Officer for her area, to have a talk with John and see what can be done about his deteriorating teaching performance. You have set up an interview with John in two days' time but you are still not quite sure how to deal with him.

What are your options?

In considering your possible course of action, you may wish to take into account not only John's possible reactions, but also those of his colleagues as well as those of other members in the community who know him well, and perhaps have been his pupils.

Activity Three:

Teacher Performance Assessment Sheet

A group of education officers in a small state have proposed the

teaching evaluation criteria reproduced below:

- a. Do you feel that all the selected criteria are valid?
- b. Do the three main parts, that is Lesson Assessment, Professional Attitudes and Detailed Comments deserve the same prominence in the assessment?
- c. Are the item ratings (that is, 1 = excellent, 2 = very good, etc.) a valid way to evaluate a teacher's performance?
- d. What are the positive features of such an evaluation sheet?
- e. And the negative?
- f. Would it be desirable, and possible, to introduce such an evaluation sheet in your educational system?

Teacher Performance Evaluation

Teacher: _____

Years of experience: _____

Evaluating Officer: _____ Rank: _____

School: _____

Class: _____

Number of pupils present: _____

Subject: _____

Topic: _____

Date: _____

Part One: Lesson Assessment

A. Presentation of Lesson	1	2	3	4	5*
---------------------------	---	---	---	---	----

1. clarity of teaching/learning objectives
--	-------

2. relation of lesson to overall scheme of work
---	-------

3. clarity and balance of lesson plan
---------------------------------------	-------

*	B. <i>Presentation of lesson</i>	1	2	3	4	5*	*
*	4. relevance of introduction	.....					*
*	5. suitability of selected content to pupils' abilities and interests	.....					*
*	6. quality of exposition	.....					*
*	7. teacher's mastery of content	.....					*
*	8. adequacy of winding up	.....					*
*	9. use of educational material	.....					*
*	C. <i>Rapport with pupils</i>						*
*	10. ability to elicit pupils' response	.....					*
*	11. degree of pupil involvement	.....					*
*	12. relevance of pupil activity to the lesson	.....					*
*	13. class control and teaching environment	.....					*
*	14. class organization and planning for groups and/or individual activity	.....					*
*							*
*	<i>Part Two: Professional Attitude</i>	1	2	3	4	5*	*
*	1. Quality of scheme of work	.....					*
*	2. Presentation of teaching notes	.....					*
*	3. Self assessment (personal record)	.....					*
*	4. Adherence to time table	.....					*
*	5. Correction of pupils' work	.....					*
*	6. Initiative and resourcefulness	.....					*
*	7. General temperament	.....					*
*	8. Readiness to learn from classroom teacher's and tutor's advice	.....					*
*	9. Personal appearance	.....					*

* **Part Three: Detailed Comments on Teacher's Performance** *

* * * * *

* Signature: *

* * * * *

* * Mark each item according to the scale where *
* 1 = excellent 2 = very good 3 = good *
* 4 = fair 5 = poor *
* * * * *

Activity Four:
Together with colleagues, adapt the assessment criteria in Follow-Up Activity Three to evaluate the work performance of non-teaching personnel.